

CLAIMS

1. A method of applying a coating to articles, comprising the steps of:
 - (i) providing a curtain (30) of solidifiable liquid coating material (16);
 - (ii) effecting relevant movement between articles (12) to be coated and the curtain (30) so as to coat the articles with the solidifiable liquid coating material (14); and
 - (iii) subjecting the solidifiable liquid coating material to the action of at least one stream of gas under pressure whereby to modify the flow characteristics of the curtain.
2. A method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the articles are articles of food and the coating material is an edible coating material.
3. A method as claimed in Claim 1 or 2, further including the steps of causing the coating material to flow along a surface of a supply means towards an outlet slot through which the coating material flows under the action of gravity to form the curtain, and introducing said at least one stream of gas between the coating material and the surface of the supply means.
4. A method as claimed in claim 3, wherein the supply means includes a trough having opposed surfaces leading towards the slot, and a layer of gas is introduced between the coating material and each of the opposed surfaces.
5. A method as claimed in claim 3 or 4, wherein said at least one stream of gas under pressure is caused to become attached to the surface

of the supply means so as to assist in establishing the layer of the gas between the surface and the coating material

6. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein at least one stream of gas under pressure is applied to the coating material after the curtain has been established in order to change the direction of the curtain and/or a physical property of the coating material forming the curtain
7. A method as claimed in claim 6, wherein said at least one stream of gas is caused to flow over a curved surface adjacent to part of the curtain by virtue of the Coanda effect whereby a change in the direction of travel of the curtain is induced.
8. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein more than one curtain of coating material is established to coat the articles, and the curtains are controlled simultaneously and/or independently.
9. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the pressure of the stream of gas is controlled to control the speed of descent of the curtain and the rate of relative movement between the articles and the curtain is controlled.
10. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the gas is air.
11. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the gas is at a temperature which is substantially the same as that of the solidifiable liquid coating material.
12. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the liquid

coating material is liquid chocolate.

13. An apparatus for applying a coating to articles, comprising:

- (i) supply means (14) arranged to provide a curtain (30) of solidifiable liquid coating material (16);
- (ii) means (10) for effecting relative movement between articles (12) to be coated and the supply means (14) whereby in use the articles (12) are coated with the solidifiable liquid coating material (16) in the curtain (30); and
- (iii) means (20, 22; 40, 46, 48) arranged to subject the solidifiable liquid coating material (16) to the action of at least one stream of gas under pressure whereby to modify the flow characteristics of the curtain (30).

14. A method of controlling a curtain of a solidifiable liquid composition comprising the steps of:

- (i) providing a curtain (30) of solidifiable liquid material (16); and
- (ii) before, during and/or after step (i), subjecting the solidifiable liquid material (16) to the action of at least one stream of gas under pressure whereby to modify the characteristics of the curtain (30).

15. A method as claimed in claim 14, comprising the steps of depositing the modified curtain of solidifiable liquid composition to form a layer in a mould or on a surface, and solidifying the deposited composition.

16. A method as claimed in claim 14 or 15, wherein the solidifiable liquid composition is an edible composition.

17. An apparatus for controlling curtain of a solidifiable liquid

composition comprising:

- (i) supply means (14) arranged to provide a curtain (30) of solidifiable liquid coating material (16); and
- (ii) means (20, 22; 40, 46, 48) arranged to subject the solidifiable liquid coating material (16) to the action of at least one stream of gas under pressure whereby to modify the characteristics of the curtain (30).